

## Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SSO-00 HEW-02 MED-02 AID-05 SCS-03

SCA-01 OES-03 /086 W

----- 038527

R 010630Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9705

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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E.O. 11652: N:A

TAGS: SWEL, SA, NI

SUBJECT: CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS ON CHOLERA DEATHS

1. ONE OF MOST SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS TO OCCUR IN ANY RECENT PILGRIMAGE HAS NOW BEEN CONFIRMED BY BOTH SAUDI AND NIGERIAN SOURCES. FOR SOME DAYS RUMOURS FLOWED THAT LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF PILGRIMS DIED IN MECCA DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS AS A RESULT OF A CHOLERA EPIDEMIC WHICH BEGAN AMONG NIGERIAN HAJJIS. DEC 31 PRESS CARRIES STORY FROM OFFICIAL SAUDI NEWS AGENCY DETAILING WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED AND DENYING NIGERIAN PRESS ASSERTION THAT WATER IN MECCA WAS TO BLAME.

2. SAUDI GOVERNMENT VERSION IS THAT NIGERIANS MUST HAVE ARRIVED WITH DISEASE AFTER SPENDING A FEW DAYS IN SUPPOSEDLY CHOLERA-FREE AREA AROUND KANO. ARMED WITH CERTIFICATES WHICH THE SAUDI AUTHORITIES ACCEPTED, THE PILGRIMS CONGREGATED IN HOUSES IN MECCA WHERE SOME FELL ILL AND DIED. NIGERIAN PILGRIM AUTHORITIES FOR SOME

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REASON DECIDED NOT TO REPORT THE SICKNESS AND TRIED

TO ESTABLISH A CLINIC FOR THE RECOVERY OF THOSE THAT WERE STRICKEN. THE RESULT WAS THAT AT LEAST 28 BODIES WERE FOUND BY SAUDI AUTHORITIES IN ONE HOUSE. OTHER SOURCES CLAIM AS MANY AS 65 NIGERIANS DIED BEFORE IT WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL AND PERHAPS AS MANY OTHER NATIONALITIES SUCCOMBED INCLUDING SOME SAUDIS. TRUTH IS HARD TO VERIFY, BUT THERE ARE CONSISTENCIES IN SAUDI STORY THAT LEND CREDENCE TO IT. THAT THE WATER IN MECCA COULD HAVE BECOME POLLUTED IS QUITE POSSIBLE AND THE SPREAD OF CHOLERA WOULD HAVE BEEN FAST IN THE OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS OF THE LARGEST PILGRIMAGE IN HISTORY. BOTH STORIES COULD HAVE ELEMENTS OF TRUTH IN THEM. SLOWNESS IN REPORTING ILLNESS TENDS TO CORROBORATE SAUDIS, AS DOES APPARENT CONCENTRATION OF DEATH AMONG NIGERIANS.

3. PROTEST HAS ALREADY BEEN REGISTERED BY SAUDIS WITH NIGERIANS AND THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION MAY BECOME INVOLVED. COMMENT: IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW IF NIGERIANS WERE COVERING UP A CHOLERA PROBLEM BEFORE THE PILGRIMAGE BEGAN.  
AKINS

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DISEASE CONTROL, CHOLERA, DEATHS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
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**Draft Date:** 01 JAN 1975  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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